

THE 50+ Connection

NEWS and EVENTS from the
Howard County Office on Aging and Independence

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OAI Virtual Programs Increase in Popularity

New Monthly Fitness Pass Debuts

Before COVID-19, Patsy Kennan spent a lot of time at Howard County 50+ Centers, partaking of the wide variety of programs on history, art and culture. “That’s one of the things I have missed most about staying at home,” she says, “So I was happy to see the announcement about virtual programs to enrich my mind and provide some connection during this pandemic.”

Over the past few months, Kennan has learned how to “bust through clutter” in her home and gained an understanding of how the World’s Fairs reflected the cultural and industrial development of the U.S. “Plus,” she adds, “I now know how easy it is to make corn dogs at home!”

To ensure continued social connectedness for Howard County’s older adults during quarantine, the Office on Aging and Independence (OAI) has developed interactive and engaging nutrition and wellness webinars and established a virtual 50+ Center with more than 68 offerings, including exercise and dance classes, cooking demonstrations, history, consumer protection, and social programs. “Our team has worked tirelessly to transform programs and services that typically are delivered in person to a virtual platform that ensures access to timely information, assistance, resources and activities,” said OAI Administrator Jenna Crawley. “The response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive.”

A recent survey of virtual program participants found that 92 percent felt that virtual exercise classes enabled them to **STAY FIT**, and 63 percent said the classes introduced them to **NEW WAYS** to exercise online. Perhaps even more importantly, 89 percent experienced an **IMPROVEMENT IN OVERALL HEALTH** and well-being; 82 percent maintained a **SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS**; and 86 percent reported an **IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR ATTITUDE** and outlook.

“I feel good about myself when I’m done,” says Nancy Duvall, “I get a good workout, and I have fun too. And if I take a quick break in the middle of class, no one is watching!” Like many older adults in Howard County, Duvall is looking forward to the time when she can attend 50+ Centers again in person, but for now is grateful for “a wonderful schedule of things to do, learn and enjoy” while staying home.



A Message from Howard County Executive Calvin Ball



This August, as we enjoy the last full month of summer, we are focused on addressing the long-term impacts COVID-19 will have on our residents and our community. Over the past several months our older adult population has been through challenging circumstances, and we encourage everyone to find some time for self-care, if you haven’t already.

As Howard County continues to safely reopen, there are many activities that allow for physical distancing, wellness and the opportunity to build connections. You could join our “Phone a Senior” program to have a friendly conversation and engage with others in the area; enjoy a stroll around one of our many parks; play a game of pickleball or bocce with members of your household; or engage in one of our virtual programs online.

August is also National Immunization Awareness Month, and although there is not a vaccine for COVID-19 yet, you may get your annual influenza or flu shot starting this month. Influenza still poses a large risk to our older adult population and it’s important to protect yourself where you can.

There is no doubt that this pandemic has stretched our limits as a community – we naturally want to build connections with one another. We hope that despite the necessary safety restrictions, you are still able to access the resources and services needed to stay healthy and thrive.

Our goal is always to improve the quality of life for all Howard County residents. Wishing you a safe and relaxing August.

“We recognize the value of offering remote programming for older adults in our community,” says Crawley, “We are also creating a model that will be sustainable even when we can resume meeting in person, which will be beneficial to those who may not be able to physically attend classes for various reasons.”

Beginning this month, OAI will offer a monthly virtual fitness pass (\$50) which enables participants to access 20 different exercise classes in a variety of formats. “The virtual group exercise pass offers a wide range of options to older adults which support overall fitness — from strength training and core work to yoga and Pilates,” says Barbara Scher, OAI’s 50+ center division manager, “There is something for everyone and at every level of ability.”

OAI will also continue to offer many FREE virtual programs, including exercise classes, line dancing and the “Let’s Cook,” “Let’s Get Social,” “Let’s Learn” and SeniorsTogether programs.


For more information about OAI’s new monthly fitness pass and other virtual programs, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/aging or call 410-313-5440 (voice/relay).

Bain 50+ Center Renovation Nears Completion

The Bain 50+ Center renovation is nearly complete! The \$2.7 million upgrade includes a new fitness center, a new roof and HVAC system, upgraded restrooms, expanded administrative offices and additional program space. These renovations will increase the size of Bain to 25,000 square feet and enable the center to expand hours of operation as well as increase opportunities for joint programming with other 50+ Centers. Although the Bain 50+ Center has remained closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, members got a sneak peek at the improvements in July during a virtual tour hosted by Center Director Linda Ethridge (pictured below, left). Pictured at right, Jenna Crawley, administrator of the Office on Aging and Independence (on right), and Barbara Scher, 50+ center division manager, get a first look at the completed fitness center space, which will soon be equipped with state-of-the-art exercise equipment. (Photo Credit: Scott Kramer)




National Immunization Awareness Month



"I have diabetes.
I could have serious problems if I get sick, so I get vaccinated."

DON'T WAIT. VACCINATE!



In August of each year, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) sponsors National Immunization Awareness Month to highlight the importance of vaccination for people of all ages. According to the CDC, flu vaccination will be especially important this year to reduce the overall impact of respiratory illnesses on the population and lessen the resulting burden on the healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A flu vaccine may also provide individual health benefits, including keeping you from getting sick with flu, reducing the severity of your illness if you do get flu and reducing your risk of a flu-associated hospitalization. This is especially true for adults age 65 and over, and those with chronic health conditions, like diabetes.

The CDC is working with healthcare providers and state and local health departments, including the Howard County Health Department, to develop plans on how to vaccinate people against flu without increasing their risk of exposure to respiratory germs, like the virus that causes COVID-19.

To learn more about seasonal flu, visit www.cdc.gov/flu or the Howard County Health Department at www.hchealth.org.

You have the

power to protect

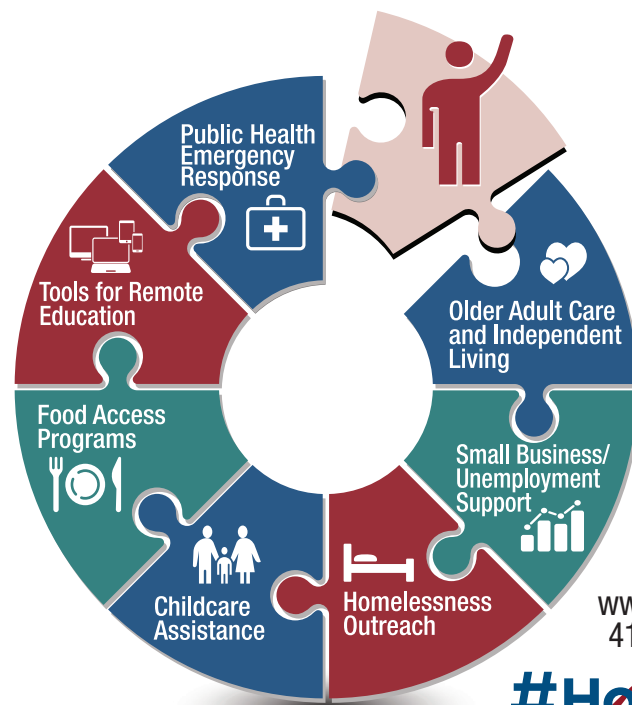
against vaccine-preventable diseases.



National Immunization Awareness Month

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